

Case Study >>>>

Blackstone Valley CHC Revolutionizes Patient Care with NextGen EPM/NextGen EHR Technology

Patients treated at community health centers (CHCs) often have chronic and complex medical problems, so it is critical to treat them with the most comprehensive, high-quality healthcare services available. Blackstone Valley Community Health Care, Inc. believes solidly in this approach as it strives to deliver the highest quality, lowest cost health care to patients in its three Rhode Island locations. "Many of our patients have chronic diseases like obesity, diabetes, hypertension, and asthma. Therefore, much of our focus is on dealing with the issues surrounding chronic disease maintenance and management—especially in children, who compose roughly half of our patient population," explains Blackstone Valley Medical Director, Jerry Fingerut, MD.

In an effort to improve care quality and increase the ability to secure much-needed funding opportunities, in 2000, Blackstone Valley Executive Director Ray Lavoie began exploring how technology solutions could help improve the center's overall efficiencies and reporting capabilities. "We needed to accelerate and improve the delivery of care, to facilitate the acquisition of reports, and to improve the execution of administrative tasks. To accomplish this, we envisioned a paperless environment where information would be readily available to clinical and non-clinical staff with a few clicks of the mouse," says Lavoie.

Fingerut adds, "Before going virtually paperless, we acquired a vast quantity of paper charts that became increasingly less manageable. In addition, to qualify for many quality-based incentives, we needed to either increase the size of our staff or upgrade to an electronic health record (EHR) system. We opted to invest in a technology solution with a proven track record of success among CHCs."

Overview

PRACTICE

Blackstone Valley Community Health Care, Inc.
Pawtucket and Central Falls, RI
www.blackstonechc.org

PRACTICE PROFILE

Blackstone Valley Community Health Care, Inc. is a federally qualified, JCAHO-accredited health center. It provides a full range of services in pediatrics, internal medicine, family medicine, midwifery, and OB/GYN, as well as dental and behavioral health services. The center's goal is to provide the highest quality, lowest cost health care possible to the patients in its community.

BUSINESS PROBLEM

Rapidly accumulating quantities of paper-based charts made documentation slow, the acquisition of reports laborious, and the execution of administrative tasks increasingly time-consuming—all of which was inhibiting the delivery of high quality care.

SOLUTION

Implemented NextGen® EPM and NextGen® EHR to streamline office administration, improve documentation, enable positive growth, qualify for many quality-based incentives, and enhance the quality of patient care.

PRODUCT DISTINCTIONS

- Improved, more secure patient data access
- Better clinical documentation and coding
- Efficient chart access
- Improved patient communications
- Comprehensive interfacing

BENEFITS

- Enhanced care quality by eliminating paper
- Improved chronic disease management and health maintenance
- Achieved superior coordination of care
- Gained cost savings/extended funding opportunities
- Expanded efficiencies/increased time savings
- Reduced risk and improved safety
- Secured better patient/provider satisfaction

NEXTGEN
HEALTHCARE INFORMATION SYSTEMS



Seeking a proven, community health-specific solution

In considering potential solutions, Blackstone Valley had some key considerations. Lavoie explains, "We conducted an intensive financial analysis at the executive level before deciding to proceed with a combined enterprise practice management (EPM) and EHR solution. And, after careful evaluation of technology providers, we chose to partner with NextGen Healthcare."

To help ensure a successful implementation, Blackstone Valley was meticulous in assigning the required internal resources to the project—and tapping into NextGen Healthcare's staff of experts. Lavoie explains, "I correlate much of our success to several critical factors. Most important was our ability to tap into NextGen Healthcare's vast experience with CHCs—and the company's knowledgeable input regarding training and appropriate timelines. Also critical was acquiring the complete buy-in—and active participation—of our executive staff from day one. Finally, because Blackstone Valley established a core group to head up this project, met weekly to move it forward, and devoted the necessary on-site space and time to training, this implementation went off without a hitch. We went from 100% paper to 100% electronic in one day."

Blackstone Valley implemented NextGen EPM in January 2007, followed by NextGen EHR in July 2007.

Improving efficiencies and patient care by eliminating paper

Since implementing NextGen software, the only paper Blackstone Valley handles are documents that come into its offices from the outside, or forms that require printing by law. Blackstone Valley achieved the following key benefits as a result of its partnership with NextGen Healthcare:

Enhanced overall quality of care

With NextGen software, Blackstone Valley patient service and care is greatly improved—and problems are proactively identified. NextGen EPM software delivers enhanced tasking and telephone messaging for better responsiveness and reduced lobby/exam room waiting times.

Because CHCs suffer from a higher percentage of no-shows than other care facilities, patients can easily fall through the cracks. "It's not unusual for children to have had only 12 of 15 recommended immunizations due to cancellations. In a report that takes 30 seconds to run, NextGen EHR software identifies these kids and helps initiate follow-ups, without pulling a single chart," says Lavoie.



Fingerut continues, “The NextGen solution helps us fix patient flow issues as they arise. For example, we can instantaneously run a monthly report of all diabetic patients detailing whether they are regularly tested for blood sugar, etc., and whether critical annual checkups—such as retinal evaluations—are taking place.”

NextGen EPM software delivers higher levels of flexibility than ever before. “We can tailor appointment templates to each provider, depending on the type of population they are serving. For example, our pediatricians have unique templates that differ from those of our general physicians. These templates may be modified based on practice patterns, which include case mix or seasonal demands,” says Lavoie.

Blackstone Valley pediatrician, Dr. Sam Ambewadikar, comments, “We work in an extremely underserved and poverty stricken environment. NextGen EHR software helped to improve the efficiency of my documentation and vastly improve our overall office workflow. Not only am I using time more intelligently now, but I’m delivering better care to my patients. I like to say that NextGen software is so easy and logical, if you can use a computer mouse, you can use it.”

Improved chronic disease management and health maintenance

Since implementing NextGen EHR software, Blackstone Valley is better able to focus on preventive health maintenance. “We can easily identify risk populations and apply more focused efforts on proactively treating patients using NextGen software’s health maintenance and disease management automatic reminders and customized templates. We can quickly and easily run reports that provide a snapshot of patients who are due—or overdue—for specific services. We can also run reports on our overall organizational performance or individual doctor performance. None of this was possible using our paper system without a significant amount of manual labor,” explains Fingerut.

Ambewadikar adds, “Today, things are less likely to slip through the cracks as they might when using paper charts. With health maintenance screens, you can order all tests that are due for a patient with a specific condition using one screen, in one quick glance.”



Superior coordination of care

With its NextGen solution, Blackstone Valley gained greater support for emergency situations. For example, if a patient in the office requires immediate transport to a hospital, Blackstone Valley can produce an output report with full history, allergies, medications, vitals, and salient issues to hand off to emergency medical technicians—who can then relay the information to emergency room clinicians. “This saves 20 minutes at each hand-off, ensuring better care and enhancing patient safety. In fact, emergency room doctors have called us to thank us for our great information. We’ve completely eliminated illegible faxes,” says Fingerut.

The integration between NextGen EHR and NextGen EPM facilitates better scheduling and helps provide patients with better overall treatment.

“We can modify the scheduling model by specialty, type of patient, and service provided. This type of flexibility provides excellent support for the triage nurse, clinical nurse, doctor, or other provider,” says Lavoie.

“Since implementing the NextGen solution, we’re wowing our patients—and making the working lives of our clinical and non-clinical staff much easier.”

Ray Lavoie
Executive Director

Because Blackstone Valley implemented the NextGen EHR system in conjunction with its parent company’s dental record system (QSI dental), the CHC now has its behavioral, dental, and medical records accessible on a single coordinated system, which greatly improves the continuity of care.

Ambewadikar adds, “When I’m on-call at night, I can easily access patient charts remotely, and document any activity in real time. This not only improves the coordination of care, but better protects Blackstone Valley from a legal liability perspective.”

Gained cost savings and expanded funding opportunities

Without increasing the size of its staff, Blackstone Valley now uses NextGen software to generate the reports required to apply for many quality-based incentives. Specifically, Blackstone Valley recently won one of eight Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) grants valued at \$1.9 million dollars. This grant will enable Blackstone Valley to create an expanded network of Rhode Island CHCs using EHR technology.

In addition, Blackstone Valley’s existing staff has been redeployed from managing health records to other revenue-generating tasks. “Our costs will be more readily managed moving forward because our staff and supply costs will naturally decrease,” confirms Lavoie.

Fingerut adds, “Funding opportunities will continue to increase because we’re now able to participate in more pay-for-performance initiatives. Today—with NextGen software—we can report on real data, and that data will be stronger because of our preventive care and disease management templates. Starting soon, Blue Cross will increase reimbursement by seven percent to providers on an EHR. We’ll be in a good position to participate—and to demonstrate improved quality of care.”

Ambewadikar comments, “It is especially helpful that the NextGen solution provides a suggested coding level for billing based on data points in clinical documentation. Before implementing NextGen software, I would try to err on the side of caution and under code a patient visit. Now, it lets me know when my documentation justifies higher coding.”



Expanded efficiencies and increased time savings

With NextGen EHR, Blackstone Valley experiences vast productivity improvements. "In 2006, pre-EHR, we recorded 46,500 visits. At the rate we're seeing patients today, we anticipate we'll provide 48,000 to 49,000 patient visits in 2008," says Lavoie.

Now Blackstone Valley is much more efficient in filling patient requests for school physical and other types of forms. Before NextGen EHR, the typical turn-around time was five days. Today, forms are generated in the exam room at the touch of a button.

Ambewadikar adds, "Not only can I print school or camp forms directly from the system while the patient is in front of me, but I can also send laboratory requisitions directly to the lab, receive results electronically for review, then populate the patient's record with that data. Through ePrescribing, I'm able to transmit electronic prescriptions to a patient's preferred pharmacy before the patient has even left the clinic."

At present, doctors on-call have remote access to patient data and can send prescriptions electronically, which has greatly improved patient care and safety, while improving efficiencies.

What's more, USD reporting is streamlined with NextGen software. "It previously took all of January and half of February to complete USD reporting. Now, using data extracted from NextGen EHR, reports are quickly generated in an essentially automated process. In addition, family planning reporting to the state of Rhode Island is similarly streamlined," explains Fingerut.

Ambewadikar concludes, "I felt comfortable ramping up on NextGen EHR in real time. In fact, my productivity returned to full speed on the fourth day after implementation. From start to finish, a well child visit now takes 15 minutes. Before, using paper, it could take twice as long."

Reduced risk and improved safety

As mentioned previously, patient care and safety dramatically improved with the new solution. "If an emergency occurs—for example, if a Blackstone Valley facility was flooded—there are no patient charts to damage. We can move to a new building and maintain full access to clinical and practice management information," says Lavoie.

Dr. Ambewadikar adds, "Safety is improved from a healthcare perspective, as well. The medication list within NextGen EHR is comprehensive—it automatically alerts doctors to potentially dangerous drug interactions and allergies. It's nearly impossible to estimate how much of an impact we have had on patient safety as a result of this feature. Plus, the system identifies patients who are not up to date with immunizations or well-child visits. But the greatest strength of the system is that it's infinitely malleable. NextGen Healthcare is open to suggestions on how to continually improve the system by enhancing its features and functionality."

Better patient and provider satisfaction

"Since the technology upgrade, the community we serve recognizes Blackstone Valley as a CHC with state-of-the-art patient and practice management equipment. This helps to improve patient, provider, and staff satisfaction, while also helping to attract and retain new staff," explains Lavoie.

A solid partnership built on mutual respect

The Blackstone Valley and NextGen Healthcare partnership is built on mutual respect and trust. "Since implementing the NextGen solution, we're wowing our patients—and making the working lives of our clinical and non-clinical staff much easier. We believe in NextGen Healthcare's solution so strongly, we continually host numerous site visits for prospective customers," concludes Lavoie.

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